





### **Commentary**

The human person carries in him - or her - self the image of and resemblance to God. It is the sign of an integrity which nothing - neither weakness, sin nor oppression - can destroy. This mysterious truth constitutes a lasting call to spiritual growth in order to reach the measure of Christ.

Christ himself lives within the Christian, within the Christian's very body, mind and soul. The Christian, woman and man must make plain, in real-life situations, the life of Christ which is within them. They are called to stand firm in obedience to the demands of the gospel until the Lord's coming again.

This witness involves the believer's whole being, including the body. Over the ages members of different churches have suffered (and still suffer) martyrdom, giving faithful witness in making the supreme act of obedience to Christ. Often the cause of martyrdom is to be found in the origins of exile. The Christian is thus called to be transformed in likeness to Christ, revealing Christ's life within his own.

"I am the light of the world"; "You are the light of the world". This light must shine forth through works of justice, charity, compassion, in such a way that it becomes a revelation of the saving grace of God. Men and women are thus enabled to glorify the Father who desires salvation for us all.

As the church, we are called upon to change cultural practices which prevent a great part of the world's population from being accorded human dignity, above all in the case of migrants. Those same elements which divide people and nations are to be found in the sin which divides churches and prevents their true witness. Moreover, unity between believers cannot be separated from the struggle to overcome the barriers dividing society.

### **Prayer**

God of love

Powerful creator of all life

Encourage us to discern in ourselves and in each of our brothers and sisters

Your image and resemblance.

Give us the strength necessary to obey the imperative of your all-embracing love.

God of love,

We pray that our witness will lead to the unity of the churches; and that with one voice we may call upon all humanity to be responsible for creation and for our neighbour.

Amen.

## Day 4

# That the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh (2 Cor. 4: 11) *Dignity of human life*

Ezra 1: 1-4	Any of those among you who are of his people - may their God go with them!
Ps. 50	The heavens declare his righteousness
Rom. 6: 6-14	Dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus
Mark 9: 33-37	Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all

### Commentary

Many aspects of life are hard. The most degrading conditions are imposed on people. For many, their very existence is something rather to be endured, and they are sunk in despair and terror.

Christ invites us to take up the challenge of living in a way that meets the demands of his kingdom. His presence among his people marks each one of us. The power of his resurrection delivers us from all death-dealing temptation. If we are aware of his presence among us - risen, but bearing the traces of the despised, rejected or excluded - we can understand the importance of the least among us. If we had believed that simple fishermen were less capable of teaching than the doctors of religion, we would never have heard the message of the apostles, nor that of a carpenter from Nazareth.

That is why we must encourage each other to question the kind of society which excludes people and neglects their material and spiritual needs.

In this struggle at the heart of the societies in which we live, we may be tempted to give up, believing that we are all alone. But we must not lose courage, for others among God's children are also working to maintain the dignity of human life and are thus making visible the life of Jesus within our mortal existence.

The church is called to reveal this light shining in the darkness. Confronted with a divided world our quest for unity is vital. It is our common calling to show the power of the resurrection in order that the world might believe. Faced with war and with distress of all kinds, surrounded by struggles for temporal power and by discord, we must not attempt to escape together but, guided by Christ, commit ourselves to help the world change course.

### Prayer

O God,  
we commit ourselves to you as we have confidence only in your strength.  
Quieten our bodies and our minds,  
Come into our hearts,  
And in our daily tasks help us to appreciate the power of renewal which you offer us.

O God,  
open up for us the road to unity  
Lead us by the hand along the way of your kingdom to be witnesses of hope.  
May we not succumb to despair for through his own resurrection Christ has overcome death.

O God in whom we hope  
Give us your Spirit of truth, courage and strength  
That we may go forward together towards the full, visible unity of the church.  
Through Jesus Christ our Lord,  
Amen.

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## Day 5

## I believed and so I spoke (2 Cor. 4: 13)

### *Courage*

Josh. 1: 1-9

Be strong and courageous; do not be frightened or dismayed

Ps. 113

He raises the poor from the dust

Eph. 2: 11-22

So then you are no longer strangers and aliens

Mark 7: 24-30

For saying that, you may go

### **Commentary**

At a time of uncertainty and fear after the death of Moses, Joshua spoke out boldly in God's name and urged the people of Israel to cross the Jordan and occupy the land which God had promised to their ancestors: land which they had left in search of food. He urged them to be strong and brave and act in accordance with God's law.

Many generations later there were still Canaanites living in part of the land and it was a Canaanite woman who came to Jesus and courageously asked him to heal her daughter. When Jesus answered, rather harshly, that it was not right to take the children's bread, she argued back that even the dogs under the table eat the children's bread. A Gentile and a woman, her care for her daughter caused her to break down barriers of culture, tradition and gender with courage and audacity. Jesus had a plan of action and urgency in carrying it out. He believed that he must go first to the house of Israel. Nevertheless he was moved by the courage and the response of the woman. On his side also he reached out across these same barriers and said "for saying that you may go - the demon has left your daughter".

In the letter to the Ephesians, the Gentile Christians are reminded that they were once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenant of promise". But now in Christ Jesus those who were once far off have been brought near. He has broken down the dividing wall and the hostility between Gentile and Jew and reconciled both groups to God in one body through the cross. Today Christians are compelled by the law of Christ to reach out across barriers of culture and race to welcome refugees and strangers and to minister to their needs. We can also learn much from the deep Christian faith of immigrants amongst us who have crossed boundaries to come to our land and who are equally part of the body of Christ.

As individual Christians and churches we are challenged to testify with courage to the truth of the gospel. As we do so, we must seek to live out and to show to the world the unity which Jesus desires for his children, for divided churches are weakened in their mission. To be the Church of Christ is a gift which brings the enormous responsibility of helping those without faith to discover that the love of God is the only answer to their need. We should ask God to heal us from our lack of unity and enable us to speak out with faith and courage.

## **Prayer**

O God you inspired your servant Joshua to speak out with courage in a time of need and lead your people to the promised land. Your Son, Jesus Christ, reached out across barriers of culture, class and gender giving healing and hope to those in need. He is our peace and in his flesh he has broken down dividing walls and created in himself one, new humanity. We pray with faith for Christ's body, the church in the world today.

You have entrusted us with the task of advancing your kingdom here on earth, help us to do so united and not divided. Allow us to hear your voice and not insist on our own priorities. Move us to overcome our divisions and live according to your law of love. Strengthen us to reaffirm our commitment to you. Allow us to share your love. Lead us to meet all those in need of your blessing especially the refugee and the stranger in our midst. Together we form the body of Christ in whose name we pray. Amen.

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## **Day 6**

### **...So that grace as it extends to more and more people... (2 Cor. 4:15)**

#### *The justice of God's grace*

Deut. 10:17-22 ...who executes justice for the orphan and the widow...

Ps. 103:1-13 The Lord is merciful and gracious

Rom. 3:21-31 They are now justified by his grace as a gift

Matt. 5:1-12 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness

## **Commentary**

Sin is the source of all forms of injustice in the world. By rejecting God's righteousness we deprive people of their dignity and of their existential rights. Unjust structures and abuse of human rights are the result of this situation. We believe that God has justified us in Christ, out of his deep love for us. God's righteousness is expressed through his reconciling and outpouring grace. Through the death and resurrection of Christ he makes us all worthy of being his daughters and sons destined to eternal communion with him.

As Christians we are sent to proclaim together the righteousness of God and the power of his grace. Our mandate is to spread the justice of God by our witness. We are called to become instruments of God's kingdom, as just men and women who live for God and seek to reveal his love and justice to all. In as much as we have our homeland in heaven, we also look for a more just society and renewed life on earth, making more visible what God desires for his sons and daughters.

In the experience of migrant peoples, we see one of the many faces of injustice in our times. Societies which are economically unjust expel their members by driving them into hunger and poverty, denying them human living conditions, and blocking their access to health and education. Others must emigrate because of war, or the impossibility of practising their faith freely. Such is the world in which we must cry out for a long-awaited justice. God identifies himself with the poor, the weak, the sick, the foreigner, the child, the elderly, the widow. That is why in the Beatitudes we are invited to be promoters of that justice which goes beyond worldly justice. This includes a search for ways to overcome those structures which discriminate against people, transforming them into means of peace and justice for all.

Our unity and vital mission is a sign of our hope. Our communion in Christ is a visible expression of the new humankind. A spiritual vision of the life we have in Christ is the essence of all justice and the basis of human rights. Our active solidarity with powerless people makes the power of God's righteousness visible.

## **Prayer**

God, thank you for your grace, which makes us your daughters and sons in Christ. You call us as your children to be advocates of your grace-filled justice in the world. Grant us grace to work, without fear, for the justice which is the only way to a real peace and a human society.



whose lives have been bruised by hardship. Lead them with tenderness to find you even in the midst of their darkest experience. Amen.

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## **Day 8**                      **Preparing for us an eternal weight of glory (2 Cor 4:17)**

*Called to unity on the path to glory*

Isa. 33:17-22	The Lord is our King, he will save us
Ps. 42	Hope in God; for I shall again praise him
Eph. 4:1-6	One Lord, one faith, one baptism
John 17:20-26	...to see my glory...

### **Commentary**

At a time Jerusalem was threatened with invasion, the prophet Isaiah looked forward to the day when God would reign and Jerusalem would be “a quiet habitation, an immovable tent, whose stakes will never be pulled up and none of whose ropes will be broken”. Refugees on the move in our world today, seeking political freedom or economic stability must often long for the time when they will no longer have to move from place to place, living in rough tents or hiding in lorries. They look for a place where they can live permanently in security and peace and well being.

The church understands itself as sharing this pilgrim state. We are a pilgrim people, strangers in this world, journeying in faith towards the heavenly Jerusalem, yearning to see the face of God. Often the pilgrim people of God share something of the longing of refugees for stability and peace and the coming of God’s kingdom in this world.

While Christianity understands all human existence as marked by the insecurity of the pilgrim state, it sees the church as having the prophetic vocation of setting forth a vision of what God is preparing for us, an “eternal weight of glory” which casts our present struggles into a larger framework of hope and promise. This future which God is fashioning is characterized by a unity in which the human race is caught up, through the Holy Spirit, in the oneness which Jesus shares with the Father. This unity is already given to us as a gift in the Spirit here and now: “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all who is above all and through all and in all.” The church is to live as a sign in the present of that unity which in its fullness we hold only as the promise of God.

Instead, we have presented ourselves to the world with disagreements which have created confusion where we are called to shed only light. Our ecumenical calling is to rediscover and make visible the unity which always comes as a gift of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes Christians seem to give up on this task. As a pilgrim people we must lay hold of the hope and certainty that we shall be made one in Christ as we shall see the glory which God gave to Christ “before the foundation of the world”.

### **Prayer**

Lord, show us your mercy and by the power of your Spirit remove the divisions amongst Christians so that your church may appear more clearly as a visible sign in the midst of all nations.

Lord, grant us renewed love, a true wisdom, and a new impulse for that unity so that the eternal message of your Son may be received as good news for all.

Lord, rekindle our faith and our hope, that we may journey with joy towards your heavenly kingdom, trusting in your promise of eternal glory.

Through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, Amen.



